

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 LONDON 19409 01 OF 02 011918Z

46

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 TRSY-02 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /069 W
----- 069824

R 011902Z DEC 76 ZFF DUBLIN
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8343
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
USMISSION OECD PARIS
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH
AMCONSUL BELFAST

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 19409

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, PINT, UK

SUBJECT: DEVOLUTION: GOVERNMENT INTRODUCES LEGISLATION

REF: (A) LONDON 15971 (B) LONDON 18541 (DEC. 1975)
(C) LONDON 8185

SUMMARY. THE GOVERNMENT'S BILL TO DEVOLVE GOVERNMENTAL
POWERS TO ELECTED ASSEMBLIES IN SCOTLAND AND WALES WAS
INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS NOVEMBER 30. ALTHOUGH
THE LEGISLATION CLOSELY FOLLOWS THE GOVERNMENT'S WHITE
PAPER PROPOSALS, GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN STRESSED THAT THE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 LONDON 19409 01 OF 02 011918Z

BILL IS NOT "CARVED IN STONE" AND THAT AMENDMENTS --

ESPECIALLY ON REFERENDUM AND TAX RAISING POWERS -- WOULD BE GIVEN SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION. THE BILL IS EXPECTED TO FACE STIFF CHALLENGES FROM ALL SIDES ONCE IT REACHES THE FLOOR OF COMMONS, AND ITS ULTIMATE PASSAGE REMAINS VERY MUCH IN DOUBT. END SUMMARY.

1. LEADER OF THE HOUSE MICHAEL FOOT INTRODUCED THE LONG-AWAITED DEVOLUTION BILL IN COMMONS IN ADHERENCE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S TIME TABLE (REF. A). THE TEXT OF THE BILL CLOSELY FOLLOWS THE PROPOSALS OUTLINED IN THE GOVERNMENT'S TWO EARLIER WHITE PAPERS (SEE REFS. B AND C FOR DETAILS) AND CONTAINED NO SURPRISES. (THE EMBASSY WILL FORWARD THE TIMES' CLAUSE-BY-CLAUSE SYNOPSIS OF THE BILL BY AIR-GRAM. COPIES OF THE BILL ITSELF ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.)

2. FOOT, SECRETARIES OF STATE BRUCE MILLAN (SCOTLAND) AND JOHN MORRIS (WALES) AND MINISTER JOHN SMITH MET WITH THE PRESS SHORTLY AFTER THE BILL WAS INTRODUCED AND APPEARED ON SEVERAL IN-DEPTH TV PROGRAMS LATER IN THE DAY. THEY DEFENDED THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS ABLY, STRESSING THAT ITS PROVISIONS ARE "NOT CARVED IN STONE" AND THAT PROSPECTIVE AMENDMENTS WOULD BE SYMPATHETICALLY RECEIVED AND CONSIDERED. SPECIFICALLY, THEY EMPHASIZED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE WILLING TO ACCEPT AN AMENDMENT ALLOWING FOR REFERENDUM IN SCOTLAND (AND PRESUMABLY WALES), PROVIDED IT WOULD NOT DELAY THE BILL'S PROGRESS (I.E. THE REFERENDUM WOULD BE HELD AFTER THE BILL HAD PASSED, THOUGH ITS APPLICATION WOULD PRESUMABLY BE CONTINGENT UPON THE REFERENDUM RESULT) AND AN AMENDMENT GIVING THE SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY REVENUE RAISING POWERS, PROVIDED THE MEANS SUGGESTED ARE LEGAL (E.G. EC REGULATIONS PROHIBIT SALES TAXES) AND PRACTICABLE.

3. THE DEVOLUTION BILL IS EXPECTED TO CARRY FAIRLY EASILY ON THE SECOND READING VOTE, THUS REACHING COMMITTEE STAGES. AS COMMONS, SITTING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, WILL HANDLE THESE STAGES, THE PROCESS IS EXPECTED TO BE CONTENTIOUS, TIME CONSUMING AND ARDUOUS. THE BILL WILL ALSO BE SUSCEPTIBLE TO FILIBUSTER. RECOGNIZING THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 LONDON 19409 01 OF 02 011918Z

IT DOES NOT HAVE THE VOTES AT THIS JUNCTURE TO IMPOSE CLOTURE, THE GOVERNMENT IS HOPEFUL THAT A "BOREDOM FACTO" WILL SET IN AS THE COMMITTEE STAGES DRAG ON, ENABLING IT TO CARRY A CLOTURE MOTION LATER IN THE SESSION, IF NECESSARY. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO SEES ACCEPTANCE OF A REFERENDUM AMENDMENT AS A MEANS TO BRING ENOUGH DISSIDENT LABOR MP'S BACK INTO CAMP TO ASSURE PASSAGE OF THE BILL IN COMMONS. BOTH SEEM LIKE TENUOUS ASSUMPTIONS. UNDER

THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT IS EVIDENT EVEN TO THE GOVERNMENT THAT THE BILL'S FUTURE IN COMMONS IS HIGHLY PROBLEMATIC. AND WITH THE HOUSE OF LORDS HAVING BECOME MORE ASSERTIVE RECENTLY, IT WOULD BE FOOLHARDY TO ASSUME THAT APPROVAL BY COMMONS IS ALL THAT COUNTS, EVEN ON A CONSTITUTIONAL MEASURE SUCH AS THIS ONE.

4. COMMENT. OUR CURRENT ASSESSMENT, ASSUMING NO ABSTENTIONS, IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN REASONABLY COUNT ON BETWEEN 230 AND 240 VOTES FROM THE LABOR BLOC, SOMETHING LIKE 20 TORY VOTES, AND ANOTHER 15 OR SO FROM

ARMSTRONG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 LONDON 19409 02 OF 02 011920Z

46

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 TRSY-02 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /069 W

----- 069813

R 011902Z DEC 76 ZFF DUBLIN

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8344

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL BELFAST

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 19409

THE NATIONALIST PARTIES AND OTHERS. THIS WOULD LEAVE THEM ABOUT 40 VOTES SHORT OF THE NUMBER NEEDED TO ASSURE THE BILL'S PASSAGE. THE MISSING VOTES WILL HAVE TO COME FROM THREE SOURCES: LABOR PARTY DISSIDENTS (OF A TOTAL OF ABOUT 80, SOME 35 MUST BE CONSIDERED HARD CORE OPPONENTS OF THE BILL), THE LIBERALS (13 SEATS) AND THE ULSTER UNIONISTS (10 SEATS). THERE IS ALSO AN OUTSIDE CHANCE THAT A FEW MORE TORIES CAN BE LURED INTO THE DEVOLUTIONIST CAMP. THE SOFTER OF LABOR'S DEFECTORS AND THE LIBERALS WOULD APPEAR TO OFFER THE BEST PROSPECTS, BUT BOTH GROUPS ARE LIKELY TO DEMAND A QUID PRO QUO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT COULD FIND VERY HARD TO SATISFY (E.G. THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 LONDON 19409 02 OF 02 011920Z

LIBERALS CAN BE EXPECTED TO DEMAND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS). GIVEN THIS OUTLOOK, WE WOULD NOT CHANGE OUR EARLIER JUDGEMENT THAT THE VOTES TO ASSURE PASSAGE ARE THERE, BUT THAT THE NECESSARY AD HOC COALITION WILL BE HARD TO FORGE. IT COULD WELL BE THAT FILIBUSTER CONSTITUTES THE MORE SERIOUS THREAT TO DEVOLUTION.

5. IF WE WERE MAKING BOOK ON THE PROSPECTS FOR DEVOLUTION. THE ODDS WOULD HAVE TO BE LESS THAN EVEN MONEY, AND PERHAPS AS LONG AS 6 TO 4 AGAINST. THE FIRST REAL INDICATION WILL COME ON THE SECOND READING VOTE, AND THE KEY INDEX WILL BE THE NUMBER OF CONSERVATIVES THAT SUPPORT THE BILL. THE LINEUPS OF THE OTHER PARLIAMENTARY BLOCS WILL BE MISLEADING OR LESS IMPORTANT. MANY OF LABOR'S DISSIDENTS WILL SUPPORT THE BILL ON SECOND READING TO DISCHARGE THEIR OBLIGATION TO THE PARTY'S ELECTION MANIFESTO, AND THE LIBERALS ARE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT ITS PROGRESS INTO COMMITTEE, AS ARE THE NATIONALISTS AND, PERHAPS, SOME OF THE ULSTERMEN.

ARMSTRONG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, LEGISLATIVE BILLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LONDON19409
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760445-0541
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761283/aaaacuig.tel
Line Count: 210
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 LONDON 15971, 76 LONDON 18541, 76 LONDON 8185
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 APR 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <06 APR 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEVOLUTION: GOVERNMENT INTRODUCES LEGISLATION
TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006